

~~functionalized diene rubber throughout a cement of a conventional rubbery polymer, and subsequently recovering the silica/rubber blend from the organic solvent.~~

At line 1 of page 1, please replace the title of the invention which now reads "PROCESS FOR PREPARING A SILICA RUBBER BLEND" with the following rewritten title:

A PROCESS FOR PREPARING A SILICA/RUBBER BLEND WHICH INCLUDES DISPERSING SILICA, A SILICA COUPLING AGENT, AND A LOW MOLECULAR WEIGHT END-GROUP FUNCTIONALIZED DIENE RUBBER THROUGHOUT A CEMENT OF A CONVENTIONAL RUBBERY POLYMER, AND SUBSEQUENTLY RECOVERING THE SILICA/RUBBER BLEND FROM AN ORGANIC SOLVENT.

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10/18/06*
Please amend the paragraph appearing at page 1, line 11 to line 27, as follows:

United States Patent 5,227,425 discloses a sulfur-vulcanizable rubber composition obtained by thermomechanical work of a conjugated diene compound and an aromatic vinyl compound prepared by solution polymerization in a hydrocarbon solvent having a total content of aromatic vinyl compound of between 5% and 50% and a glass transition temperature (Tg) of between 0° and -80°C with 30 to 150 parts by weight per 100 parts by weight of elastomer of a silica having a BET surface area of between 100 and 250 m²/g, a CTAB surface area of between 100 and 250 m²/g, an oil absorption measured in DBP of between 150 and 250 ml/100 g, and an average projected area of the aggregates greater than 8500 nm² before use and between 7000 and 8400 nm² after thermomechanical mixing as well as the additives conventionally employed, with the exception of the sulfur vulcanization system, comprising at least one heat step reaching a temperature of between 130°C and 180°C for a suitable period of time of between 10 seconds and 20 minutes which is a function of the temperature selected in order to carry out the mechanical work and of the nature and volume of the components subjected to the mechanical work, followed by a finishing step consisting of the incorporating of the vulcanization system by mechanical work at a temperature below the vulcanization temperature.